



GREEN TEACHER AWARD 2018



CONTENT

Introduction.....	3
Blair van Pelt.....	4
Chizu Sato.....	6
Ynte van Dam	8
Kim Poldner.....	10
Tjeerd-Jan Stomph.....	12
Closing words	14





INTRODUCTION

In the spirit of Wageningen University & Research's ambition to be leader in sustainability, Green Office Wageningen honours teaching staff who can be distinguished as 'Green Teachers'.

The idea of the Green Teachers award is to recognize teachers working at Wageningen University who inspire students to think and act in a sustainable manner; Some teachers use innovative methods to stimulate students to be actors of change. Others inspire by being an example to follow. There are also teachers who carefully think about the details of the course and contribute to sustainability by preparing superior digital course materials.

All these teachers deserve a recognition for their good work, they have all been nominated by students. This year we have 5 Green Teachers!

The nominated Green Teachers of 2018 are:

Blair van Pelt

Chizu Sato

Ynte van Dam

Kim Poldner

Tjeerd-Jan Stomph

BLAIR VAN PELT



Blair van Pelt works at two Chair Groups, the Farming Systems Ecology Group and the Soil Quality Group. She is originally from California and came to Wageningen in 2011 to do her master in Organic Agricultures with focus on education. After completing her master she worked a couple of years as a consultant in Agriculture Education, and has now since one year been working as a lecturer at Wageningen University. Blair coordinates many courses and teaches Organic Agriculture and Society, which runs twice a year with around 70 students. Blair was the initiator of the Field, a student farm in Wageningen, and she sometimes gives workshops and coaching sessions to teachers at other universities.

“I think it’s pretty cool to have been nominated for the ‘Green Teacher Award’. It’s a wonderful recognition of what I’m doing. When I was a student at Wageningen, Valentina Tassone was one of the teachers who inspired me, I really enjoyed her course. I loved that she gives students the space to make the course theirs by applying the content to a project of their choice. This is something that I certainly took with me and apply in my courses.

What I want to do is to stimulate innovative ideas in my students. I give my students the space to chew on their ideas, and create an environment for them to flourish. That also means that I as a teacher have to be constructively critical and challenge students to go a step further. I have fabulous smart students with fabulous ideas. What I give them is the space to develop them. It’s a powerful process, especially in an international setting and diverse group of people. Students are constantly learning from each other, and being inspired by each other.

It’s important to “walk the talk”, and give real life examples of sustainability in class, so that the students can find themselves in their education and make connections between what they’re learning and what they’re seeing and experiencing in their own life. That’s why I don’t have any boundaries of what is relevant teaching material. I use everything and anything. I think one of my strengths as a lecturer is my willingness to try new things. And also being able to really tap into the diversity of my students. The art of being a teacher is to draw out the strengths and competences of individual students, as well as the group as a whole.

I put a lot of focus on curriculum development and innovative teaching. I believe augmented or virtual reality is interesting way of bringing experiences into the classroom and enrich the learning process. This way students can connect with real life examples in a whole other way. I want to offer my students an experience, not just lecture.”

CHIZU SATO



Chizu Sato has been working at the Sociology of Consumption and Household Chair Group since 2011. She has a background in International Development Studies and Feminist Studies and received her doctorate and completed a graduate certificate in Advanced Feminist Studies both from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the US where she worked as a teaching assistant in the Women Studies programme. Chizu teaches two main courses a year, Gender and Consumer Culture and Lifestyles and Consumption. She also teaches one additional MSc thesis preparatory course, and offer a guest lecture in several courses. In total, she teaches more than 180 students per year.

“I don’t want to be known as a ‘Green Teacher.’ I don’t consider myself ‘green’. For me, sustainability is a practice. I do not always make the most sustainable choice and my knowledge is limited, but I say I do practice sustainability and want to do more. This is somewhat similar to what I say to my students: I am a racist. Living in a racist culture, I have learned certain values and practices that contribute to the reproduction of racial inequalities. But, this does not stop me from anti-racist practices. I say I strive to practice social justice in my everyday life, including in my teaching.

One of my main interests in teaching is linking sustainability with inequality. Coupling these two is very important, since at the heart of sustainability there is always an issue of inequality. If we talk about sustainability without linking it to inequality, especially for the privileged population, we miss opportunities to bring about truly sustainable development. To help my students see how inequality relates to sustainability I make sure that the role of the privileged population goes beyond being a ‘green’ consumer. I encourage my students to think about how their everyday actions and those of our companies and governments relate to the well-being of distant humans and non-humans, such as nature. By developing an analytical lens to see interdependencies between our actions and those of distant others I believe that students learn to think sustainability in more socially just ways and to be an active political citizen of the world, who thinks beyond ‘personal’ responsibility.

A teacher who has inspired me is dr. Alex Deschamps, with whom I worked as a teaching assistant at UMass Amherst. She was inspiring because she encouraged her students to link the personal and the political and the local and the global, which is what I try to do with my students. In my classrooms, I encourage students to share personal stories and help them to connect those stories to local-global issues of inequality and sustainability.

I believe this is one way to help bridge theory and practice, which is crucial for us if we are to practice sustainability outside of our classroom, in our everyday lives.

To be an effective teacher I must know what students do and are interested in. I use assignments and in-class activities to learn this and I am always eager to explore new teaching methods. I also think it is important to equip students to see their own and others' irrationalities, contradictions and contingencies. By itself this critical practice sometimes results in pessimism and cynicism. Critical practice must be complemented by hope if that critical insight is to become permanent and helpful in supporting sustainable development. To ensure that students learn to be both critical and hopeful, I help students to survey encouraging, positive practices that already exist and/or are emerging in different social locations."



YNTE VAN DAM

Ynte van Dam works at the Marketing and Consumer Behaviour Group in the department of Social Sciences. He has studied psychology at University of Amsterdam and the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. Ynte worked in the private sector up until 1989, the year he started teaching at Wageningen University. He now

teaches courses in consumer behaviour and sustainable marketing, and meets maybe 200 students per year in marketing and consumer behaviour. He acquired his teaching skills over time, throughout his almost 30 years in the profession. In addition to his teaching job, Ynte is part of Green Office Sustainability Board of Experts, a group of researchers knowledgeable about different aspects of sustainability.

“It’s a pleasant surprise to be nominated for the ‘Green Teacher’s Award’. I think it rewards my enduring passion for sustainable consumption and marketing.

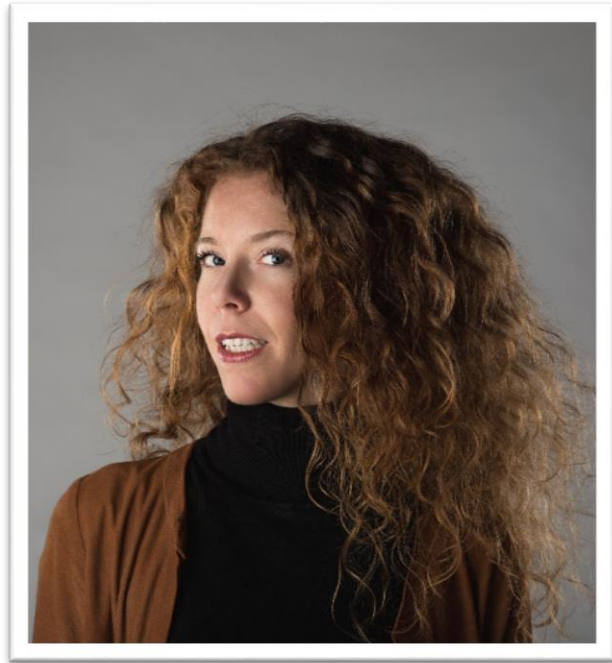
One of the most important competencies for sustainable development is critical thinking: going back to the fundamental assumptions and questioning those. I try to focus on what is not sustainable, I encourage students to develop their own visions and tools for sustainable development, and I challenge them to critically reflect on these visions as well. In order to stimulate the development of innovative ideas, I create doubt and confusion. I believe in self-organising systems/anarchy in the classroom. Sometimes it just requires a long time of silence before we have a discussion going, and I can be silent for a very long time. After more than 20 years of teaching classes on sustainability in marketing I still don’t know what sustainable behaviour is, I just know what is not sustainable in marketing. Actually I am bit scared of people who know with certainty what is sustainable and how their sustainable future must be reached. So I’m basically just muddling through.

As a lecturer I like to get students out of their comfort zone and keep them off balance to stimulate their critical thinking. And of course, sharing my passion for sustainable marketing.

I have always been inspired by two of my previous teachers, Prof Duijker who taught psychology at University of Amsterdam, and Don Mellenbergh, who taught research methods, also at University of Amsterdam. For me the only way to teach is to share your passion for a topic, and these teachers did that.”

KIM POLDNER

Kim Poldner works at the Management Studies Chair Group, teaching courses in mainly Entrepreneurship. Kim has an educational background in fashion design, and has also studied organization and cultural theory at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. After



working a couple of years she pursued a PhD in Switzerland, with the topic of her dissertation being sustainable entrepreneurship in the fashion industry. Since two years she has been teaching at Wageningen University, currently teaching 4 courses full time with around 150 students a year. Kim is an interactive lecturer, who puts focus on interdisciplinary group work rather than individual exams. Besides teaching, Kim is involved in several research projects, and supervises ACT and thesis projects, all revolving around circular fashion.

“Being nominated for the Green Teacher Award is a privilege, and it is empowering to be recognized for sustainable teaching. For me, sustainability is not only something to be understood with the mind, but should be experienced with the body. I use a lot of embodied learning in my classroom, meaning I try to complement theory with experiences. The use of art, music, and video can move you in unexpected ways, allowing sustainability to be experienced on a deeper level. This opens channels and receptivity for innovative ideas. When it comes to sustainability innovation is key, and I really want my students to think out of the box: no idea is too crazy. Sustainability is also inherently about leadership. My goal is to empower students to become change makers for a greener planet, and I believe anyone can be a leader. I try to make my students reflect on their own leadership capacities, and what kind of impact they make in their own life, because that is where it starts.

In my classroom I extensively apply the flip-the-classroom model, encouraging my students to bring their own ideas, knowledge and learning objectives into the classroom. I think this co-creation with my students, and somehow giving up control of the classroom is one of my greatest strengths as a lecturer. It can however also be a weakness, since sometimes students may want more stability and structure in a class. But to me that is just less exciting.

I extensively involve current research in my courses. My students are working directly with designers and entrepreneurs on new technologies for more sustainable fashion supply chains.

This includes new processes of dyeing fabrics by for example using bacteria and creating alternatives to leather grown from mushrooms. The results of these collaborations will be shown in an upcoming exhibition in Arnhem in June, I'm very thrilled about it."

More information about the exhibition can be found here:

<https://stateoffashion.org/en/>

Learn more about WUR circular fashion activities:

<https://www.wur.nl/circularfashion>

TJEERD-JAN STOMPH



Tjeerd-Jan Stomph works as crop physiologist with the Centre for Crop Systems Analysis. At the age of 15 he was inspired by the book *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, which led him to study Biology in Wageningen. Later on he pursued a PhD in agriculture at the Reading University (UK). He has now been working at WUR since 1991. Tjeerd-Jan teaches and coordinates the courses *Soil Plant Relations* and *Research Methods in Crop Science*, and he is also participating in the new course *Climate Smart Agriculture*. He teaches about 150 students a year, both Bachelor and Master Students. Besides teaching he is also involved in several research activities related to agriculture.

“I’m a bit puzzled about having been nominated for the ‘Green Teachers Award’, since I don’t teach courses in which sustainability is a specific aspect. That’s interesting about teaching, you try to create a learning environment, but you never know how it is perceived. And apparently my students perceive me as a ‘green teacher’.

Two of my old high school teachers have been an inspiration to me in my teaching. They inspired in the way that they made me you think about things, not so much the content. That is also why I feel like academic training is about making people think, towards a more philosophical level, thinking about society and your role in society. I hope to inspire one or two students this way every year. I believe my strength as lecturer is that I’m verbally strong, I’m able to explain things from different angles. I tend to be quick in thinking of several examples. And I love to teach, not so much in a lecture setting, but more in a one to one setting. I love to discuss with my students and see how they tackle issues. I believe this is an important strength. I extensively use case studies and give practical tutorials in my classes, as a way for the students to grasp the material. At least for me it’s one of the ways I tend to learn things, by looking at real world examples and then go back to the theory.

To me the best way of inspiring students and motivate them to have a sustainable behaviour, is to discuss how to translate what you understand about a system or a problem, to your individual behaviour. I try to get a discussion going about the individual choices, to make my students reflect upon how their behaviour relates to what they know about certain environmental problems. I also try to integrate system-thinking in all my courses. I aim to make my student think about what system they’re analysing, and in what larger system the analysed system in turn fits. As a teacher I try to think about all the layers of a problem, and then decide what is relevant at what moment of a course or for which student.

By definition sustainability is always about the future. Also because a solution that may seem sustainable now, may not necessarily turn out to be sustainable in the longer run once we know ore or new things. I do mention to my students the problems that are created by my generation and which science may not have addressed properly, and that it is their role to take the next step. They need to use the knowledge we convey, but also generate new knowledge. I hope to inspire students to think about what is next.”

CLOSING WORDS

We in Green Office are very enthusiastic about our Green Teachers and their effort to contribute to sustainability on our university. We would like to thank all of them for contributing to our university and to the Green Teacher Awards 2018: They are the ones setting an example! We therefore hope they will continue to work this way and to inspire others.

It was good to see that not only sustainability related courses have Green Teachers and therefore that it is possible for everyone to teach in a green way. We therefore want to ask all different readers of this booklet (students, teachers and other employees) to spread the word and in this way inspire all of Wageningen UR. Together we can make our university and the world a lot greener!

If you would like to know more about the Green Teacher Awards or our other projects, please visit our website www.greenofficewageningen.nl

